

V EASTER – May 18th, 2014

**I AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE – Biblical Commentary by F. Alberto Maggi
OSM**

Jn 14.1-12

Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

And you know the way to where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us."

Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.

They are the last moments that Jesus is with His disciples and Jesus wants to assure and tranquilize them. He wants them to understand a paradox: that His death will not be a lose for them, but an advantage; that His death will not be an absence, but an even greater intense presence. Therefore Jesus, who has just announced the betrayal of Peter to the disturbed disciples and His disciples are about to fight against a terrible tempest, Jesus assures them that God is with Him.

Here is why Jesus says: “« Believe in God; believe also in me »”. And then He assures them on the effect of His departure and says “«In my Father's house are many rooms»”. Here it is necessary to understand this verse well in the light of verse 23 when Jesus says “«If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him »”. It does not mean to dwell with the Father, but the Father that comes to dwell with mankind. This is the novelty, the great

novelty proposed by Jesus: the sanctuary where God shows himself, is no more, but in every person who welcomes him, God shows himself there.

Therefore Jesus' God is a God that asks to be welcomed to blend in with the person, expanding his capacity of love. This is where he will dwell. But why does Jesus speak of "many rooms"? Because, being a God of love, love cannot be expressed and shown in only one form, but in many forms as many forms as are the nature of mankind, and their situations. Then Jesus continues this reassurance saying that where He is they will be there also, that is in the sphere of the dimension divine, the sphere of love.

And here Jesus is interrupted by one of the disciples, Thomas, who asks, literally: "*«Lord, we do not know where you are going»*". It is a word that indicates a place of no return. He does not understand how death can have positive aspects. And Jesus replies with a solemn and important statement: "*«I am..»*", therefore claims the divine condition, "*«..the way...»*", that is the way towards something and this way is towards "*«..the truth..»*". Jesus does not claim to have the truth, Jesus does not say: "I have the truth", but "I am the truth".

He does not ask the disciples to have the truth, but to be the truth. The difference is great. Who has the truth, for the very fact of possessing it, thinks he can judge, and condemn who does not think like Him. To be in the truth means to be in the same dimension of God's love that sees good in mankind as an absolute value. To be in truth means to not separate from anyone, but to be near all in an attitude of love that transforms itself into service.

Truth is a dimension divine that cannot be expressed through doctrinal formulas, but only through the offer of love and communication of works of love. And at the end there is "*the life*". Who follows Jesus in this way and is truth like Him, arrives through an indestructible life, the fullness of life.

And so Jesus says to His disciples: "*« If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. »*" Strangely He does not say "You will know him in the future", but Jesus states: "*«From now on you do know him and have seen him»*". Where have the disciples seen and known the Father? In the washing of the feet. Jesus, who is the visual manifestation of God, has shown who God is: love that makes itself service.

So, more the support for Jesus is authentic, making of one's life love and service for the others, and more the knowledge of God will be greater, And here there is another disciple, this time Philip; he does not understand how in Jesus God can be seen and says: "*Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.*" Here is Jesus' important revelation "*«Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. »*".

At the end of the prologue of this Gospel, John had made an important declaration: "*No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side,¹ he has made him known.* What does this mean? That Jesus is not like God, but God is like Jesus, the evangelist invites us to suspend the thoughts on God, the knowledge of God is centered on Jesus. All that Jesus does and says, all this is God.

Therefore all the ideas, the images, the thoughts, the knowledge that one has of God, and does not find them in Jesus, they must be eliminated because they are incomplete or false. Jesus is very clear: “ *Who has seen me has seen the Father*”. And what is this Father that manifests himself in Jesus? Love that becomes service, as we have seen in the washing of the feet.

And Jesus, in front of the disbelief of the disciples, says to them, if they do not want to believe Him for His words at least believe Him for his works. The works – and Jesus’ works are all actions which He communicates and enriches the life of others – they are the only criterion of credibility. The end is expressed in a solemn formula, with the Amen, Amen, that is “*«Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; »*” Jesus’ works are all vital communications for the others and then Jesus says – and it seems amazing, “*«...greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father»*”.

How can one accomplish greater actions than Jesus? Jesus had not been able to respond to all the needs of mankind. But it is the duty of the community of disciples based on His name, that puts the good of mankind, as the one and only sacred value of their existence, that puts into this dynamism of the ‘being’ the truth, therefore not ‘having’ the truth to judge others, but ‘being’ the truth to be close to everyone. This is the community where the divine action will grow and will be overflowing in favour of others.

Jesus says: “ All this will be because I go to the Father”, because He collaborates with them. Therefore Jesus assures them that His death will not be an absence, but a presence even more intense and life-giving.